

New York Times
11 August 1968

Slick African Magazine Gains a Wide Following

By ALFRED FRIENDLY Jr.
Special to The New York Times

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, Aug. 10—The only apparent common ground between Nigerians and Biafrans at their peace conference here this week has been their shared desire to read the latest issue of *Transition*, Africa's slickest, sprightliest and occasionally sexiest magazine.

The interest of the two sides, who failed to agree on anything else during seven hours of negotiations spread over five days, was heightened by the news that distribution of an issue of *Transition*, featuring three articles on the Nigerian civil war, had been banned in Nigeria.

The Lagos distributors said in a letter to the editor of the bimonthly that "it would be against the public interest and peace" to sell his magazine, because it contained "shocking and most slanderous" photographs of victims of the 13-month-old conflict.

Professes Disappointment

Publicly, Rajat Neogy, the bearded, intense, 29-year-old founder and editor of *Transition*, professed to be most disappointed by what he said was the first banning of his publication since the initial run of 2,000 copies appeared in October, 1961.

The first issue was handset, two pages at a time, and printed on a flat-bed press. The latest edition, with a circulation of 12,000, contains 64 imaginatively designed, provocative pages.

The central feature, illustrated with gruesome photographs, presents the views of the Biafran novelist, Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian administrator, Ukpa Asika — both of



Station Kaplan
Rajat Neogy, the editor

them delegates to an earlier, unsuccessful peace conference — and a self-exiled Nigerian journalist, Peter Enahoro. Elsewhere in the issue, however, are excerpts from a new novel by a Swedish woman, two short stories by a young Ugandan and several lengthy articles on politics and business in East Africa.

"What I wanted to do in 1961," Mr. Neogy told a recent visitor to his editorial offices in Kampala, Uganda, "I have just begun to achieve in 1968." When he started publishing, the magazine "had to be accommodating to all kinds" of aspiring writers and "dull government tracts," he said. Now "there is such a blossoming of publications all over," the Uganda-born editor-poet explained, "we can be better" than in the early days.

"We never allow anyone to feel that they were printed just because they were Africans writing," he added. "When you

are printed in transition you have arrived."

Mr. Neogy, who has a great deal to be immodest about, sees "everything that is published and I know ours is the single most important magazine on the continent."

It is even slowly on its way to being financially sound, requiring now only one dollar of contributions for every dollar it earns instead of the initial five for one.

Nevertheless, the magazine's outside support has dropped since the revelation that the Congress of Cultural Freedom, an early sponsor, was in turn receiving funds from the United States Central Intelligence

Agency. An affiliate of the Ford Foundation has since taken over the subsidy.

A questing irreverence breathes out of the pages of every issue since Number 26, published in mid-1966, featured a still-controversial dissection of the career of the Ghanaian dictator, Kwame Nkrumah, shortly after he was overthrown. Last fall, another article on the white expatriate in Africa, seen as the reincarnation of Tarzan, started a flood of lively correspondence.

For exotic interest, Mr. Neogy has published discussions of the importance of orgasm, as well as scholarly translations of Sanskrit love poetry.